

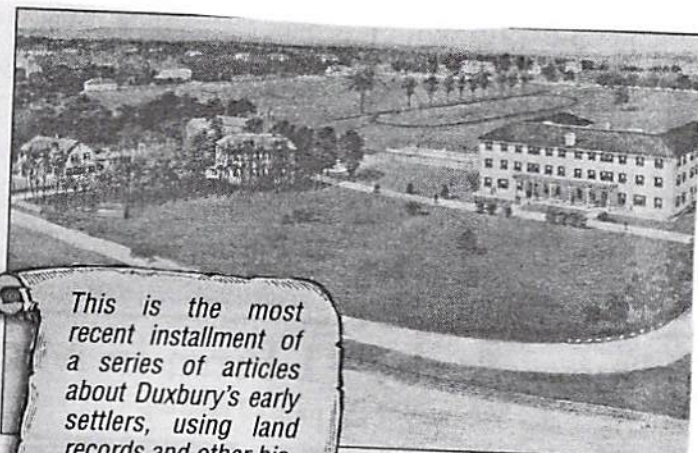
# George Soule: Powder Point

When Eliphas Weston married Priscilla Peterson he became the first Weston to hold land on Powder Point. Priscilla was the Pilgrim George Soule's great granddaughter and she had inherited the property from her father, Isaac Peterson. Eliphas acquired other property on Powder Point adjacent to their homestead. Priscilla and Eliphas had eight sons, one of whom was Ezra, "King Caesar." Of the eight sons, four drowned in mishaps at sea. In 1762 their son Joshua, at age 14, went, with his father, from Powder Point across the bay to Duxbury Beach to bring home some cedar logs. With the boat overloaded on the return trip a wind came up and it started snowing. The boat was swamped and they both



By LAMONT "MONTY" HEALY

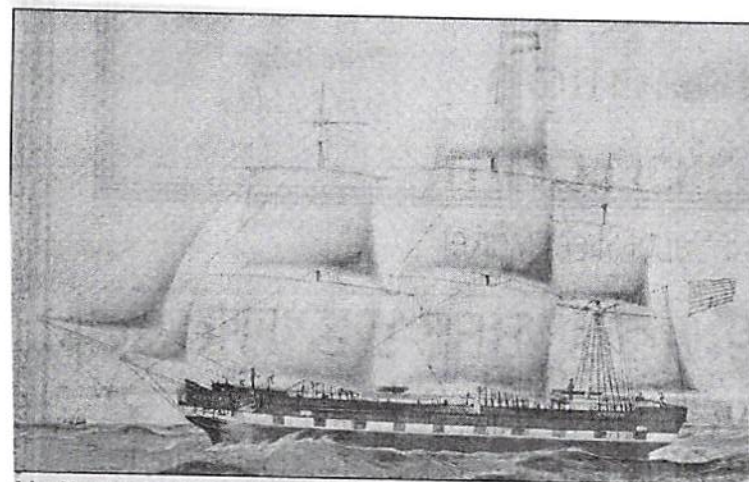
drowned. Priscilla lived to see her husband and three sons drown. Her fourth son drowned after her death. Eliphas was a shipwright, a sometime fisherman and a boat builder using his front yard as a workshop. A modest operation when you consider what his son and grandson accomplished.



*This is the most recent installment of a series of articles about Duxbury's early settlers, using land records and other historical documents.*

**Powder Point School for Boys.**

Courtesy of Duxbury Rural and Historical Society



**Ship Hope: the largest ship built in New England up to that time, launched into the Blue Fish River by Ezra Weston II (King Caesar).**

Courtesy of the Duxbury Free Library



and his associates for their efforts on these projects.

If Ezra Weston I was successful in the shipbuilding business, his son Ezra II was all the more so. Ezra II not only inherited the name, but also the King Caesar sobriquet. Daniel Webster in a speech in Saratoga, N.Y. in 1841, said of Ezra II "...one of our nearest neighbors is the largest ship owner in the United States. During the past year he has made what might suffice for two or three fortunes of moderate size." I have heard him referred to as the richest man in America at that time. He amassed a fleet of as many as 100 ships. His ships were known around the world for their construction and for being "tight," so they could ship cargo that needed to be kept dry. His largest ship, and the largest to be launched in New England at the time, was the Hope (880 tons). When the ship was launched in 1841 the keel scraped the bottom of the Blue Fish River, and it took a week to turn it and move it into Duxbury Bay. The last ship to be launched from the 10-acre yard (across from the King Caesar wharf) was Manteo (599 tons). She was launched in 1843. As the ships got larger, the Blue Fish River was too shallow and many of Duxbury's shipbuilders and traders moved to Boston. The late 1840s signaled the end of Duxbury's shipbuilding boom and the town entered a five-decades long period of economic difficulty. Although there are many Weston descendants living today, the only descendants of

Ezra I (King Caesar) started a shipbuilding business of his own. At first he built or acquired a small fleet with which he did some trading and fishing, providing a substantial income. He was a ship's carpenter and did work for other shipbuilders. His shipyard was busy in the 1760s, and by 1771 he had built five ships. His shipbuilding business prospered until the Revolution, when he probably sold the ships he had. After the Revolution he resumed his business by building a fishing fleet. These ships fished on the Grand Banks, primarily for cod. This business was very successful. Whether he acquired the King Caesar name from his business acumen or his influence in town politics is subject to debate. The name stuck when he and others got

on the Westons and Duxbury shipbuilding, read Patrick J. Browne's "King Caesar Duxbury," which you can buy online or at the Duxbury Rural & Historical Society, duxburyhistory.org/publications.

As much as the two King Caesars did, they are memorialized with a stone table at Bumpus Park, across the street from the King Caesar house. Amazingly, their horse Honest Dick is remembered with a rather substantial brick monument located by Glade Creek on Powder Point Avenue. Honest Dick worked for three generations of Westons, generating horsepower for the machinery in the ropewalk. Ezra I built and managed the ropewalk, spinning rope for his own ships as well as selling to other shipbuilders. The ropewalk was used from about 1799 to 1846, almost 50 years.

In 1886 Frederick Bradford Knapp, a civil engineer, who was superintendent of buildings and grounds at Harvard University, bought the King Caesar property from Ezra II's grandchildren for a preparatory school. Shortly thereafter he built the Powder Point School for boys. In later years the school facilities were used as a hotel during the summer.

There was also a public school on Powder Point. It was located near (or over) Glades Creek, next to where the Honest Dick monument is currently located. This school was the first school in the United States to have a student government. Legend has it that you could drop a fishing line through the floor into Glades Creek.